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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PNAT](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BADR ORGANIZATION AND FADHILA MEMBERS COMMENT ON
STATE OF EMERGENCY IN BASRAH

REF: A. A) BASRAH 86
[B. B\) BASRAH 85](#)

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARGARET SCOBAY FOR
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a June 4 meeting with PolOff, Badr Organization parliamentarian Sheikh Dhiya al-Din al-Fayyad said the current violence in Basrah can and should be contained by the provincial council. In a June 8 meeting with PolOff, Fadhila parliamentarian Kareem al-Yaqubi, cousin of Fadhila spiritual leader Sheikh Mohammad al-Yaqubi, echoed these sentiments. Both al-Fayyad and al-Yaqubi argued that Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki had made a mistake declaring a state of emergency in Basrah, al-Fayyad and al-Yaqubi argued, because this undermined the local authorities. The problems in Basrah, they argued, have been blown out of proportion by the Arab media. As a solution, al-Fayyad argued for holding early elections in Basrah Province. PolOff replied that the problems in Basrah are very serious. Al-Yaqubi said that early elections would set a bad precedent, noting that many parties in Basrah province are simply looking for a way to take power from Fadhila. End Summary.

Fayyad Complains of Sensationalist Media

[1](#)2. (C) Badr Organization parliamentarian Sheikh Dhiya al-Din al-Fayyad told PolOff in a June 4 meeting that the Arab media was to blame for "blowing the Basrah situation out of proportion." Al-Fayyad said that some elements of the Arab media try to portray Coalition Forces (CF) in the worst light possible, while other elements seek to discredit Iraqi Shia. Al-Fayyad also argued that the "sensationalist media" was making the problem worse by exacerbating sectarian tensions and stirring up the local populace. On June 8 Fadhila parliamentarian Kareem al-Yaqubi made a similar argument. What is needed, he contended, was unbiased media reporting. PolOff agreed reporting should be unbiased, but said the security situation in Basrah demands attention. (Comment: According to REO Basrah, local criticism of media coverage is most likely due to the dampening effect it is having on foreign investments. See Ref A. End Comment.)

State Of Emergency a Mistake

[1](#)3. (C) Al-Fayyad and al-Yaqubi said that Prime Minister (PM) Nuri al-Maliki made a mistake when he declared a state of emergency in Basrah. "This will only increase sectarian tension," al-Fayyad said. He added that by

declaring a state of emergency the PM usurped the powers of the provincial council. The problems in Basrah, al-Fayyad and al-Yaqubi argued, must be solved by the local authorities. They both asked rhetorically, "Will the PM declare a state of emergency in every area of Iraq that has violence?" (Comment: The declaration of a state of emergency by the PM was welcomed by the majority of Basrah's residents, who no longer trust the local authorities to resolve the city's security crisis. End Comment.)

Timing of Elections

14. (C) Al-Fayyad said the Badr Organization favors holding early elections to replace the Basrah Provincial leadership. Presently, two-thirds of the provincial council must vote to remove the governor, and the provincial council has not been able to muster the necessary votes to remove the governor in recent council meetings (ref B). Al-Fayyad said that fresh elections should be held as quickly as possible to get rid of the Basrah Governor, whose poor leadership he said had caused the current crisis. Al-Fayyad predicted SCIRI will increase its share of seats on the Basrah provincial council.

15. (C) Al-Yaqubi, dismissed such suggestions, arguing that political parties such as SCIRI and Badr simply want to unseat Fadhila from the Governor's chair. Al-Yaqubi said that other political parties have an interest in stirring up sectarian tension in Basrah. He argued that, as unrest worsens, the Fadhila Party and the Basrah Governor can be accused of not

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protecting the local populace. "Other parties are capitalizing on the violence," he said.

Comment

16. (C) Sheikh al-Fayyad, who is well-known to us, surprised us with the frankness of his comments. By arguing for fresh elections, which he predicted would boost SCIRI's total number of seats on the provincial council and get rid of the current governor, al-Fayyad underscored the intensity of the rivalries among the various factions in Basrah. Hassan al-Rashid of the Badr Organization is the most likely replacement for the governor. As more power is devolved to the local Iraqi authorities, these rivalries will most likely intensify even more.

KHALILZAD